The Abridgement OF A SERMON

Preached on the Faſt-day appointed to be held for the good ſucceſſe of the

TREATIE

That was ſhortly to enſue between the KING and the PARLIAMENT, *Septemb.* 12. 1648.

By Mr *Deſpagne* Miniſter of the Goſpel at the French Church at *Durham*-houſe.

Faithfully tranſlated into Engliſh By *Umfreville*, Gent.

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Mr. John Deſpagne's *Advertiſement to the Reader, ſhewing the reaſon why hee abridged his Sermon, and puts it not forth as large in Print, as he delivered it to his Audience.*

I Set not downe here all I ſaid on the following Text, but onely a ſhort Sum of the chief heads, and rather the Application in very deed, then the Explication of it : For I hold it more profitable to read Sermons ſhortened, and brought into a ſmall compaſſe, then long-

winded, and tedious Diſcourſes; in which a man oftentimes muſt ſpend much time, and tumble over a whole mountain of Sand, before hee can there finde one grain of Gold.

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The TEXT, 2 Sam. 5. 1, 2, 3.

Then came all the Tribes of Iſrael *to* David *unto* Hebron, *and ſpake, ſaying, Behold, we are thy bone, and thy fleſh. Alſo in time paſt, when* Saul *was King over us, thou waſt he that leddeſt out, and broughteſt in* Iſrael: *and the Lord ſaid to thee, Thou ſhalt feed my people* Iſrael, *and thou ſhalt be a Captain over* Iſrael. *So all the Elders of* Iſrael *came to the King to* Hebron, *and King* David *made a league with them in* Hebron *before the Lord.*

HEre's an Agreement ſworn between *David* and the States of his Realm, after a Civil War of ſeven yeers continuance: Ours is

is now come to its ſeventh yeer; God grant it may be the laſt: and that having ſo long a time implored the God of Battels, wee may at length give thanks unto the God of Peace. Let not any make here finiſter interpretations: The Hiſtory that I have choſen to be the ſubject of this Diſcouſe is not directly in and throughout applicable unto the preſent ſtate of our condition. But what though our War both in its cauſes and ſucceſſe hath been far different from that which fell between *David* and *Iſrael*, yet is there great conformity in other matters, which I forbear to ſpeak of.

So then, the Tribes of *Iſrael* ſent toward *David*, and treat with him about the conditions on which he ſhall reign over them. Not to enter into the particularities of this Text; let us ſpeak onely of the demands, promiſes and agreements that paſt on the one ſide and the other: and this will afford us two Points, on the which at this time I will onely inſiſt. 1. *David*'s duty,

duty, and in generall that of all Kings. 2. The People's duty toward their Kings, and toward themſelves.

Of the firſt.

What Conditions were then impoſed upon *David?* Queſtionleſſe, thoſe that God had expreſt in his Law *Deut.* 17. There are five Articles whereunto the Law bound the Kings of *Iſrael.* 1. That they ſhould leavie no great Cavalry: the reaſon of that was to hinder them from holding correſpondence with *Egypt* their Neighbour; or elſe that they might have no minde to make war there, for revenge of the wrong their fore-fathers had received from the Egyptians. 2. That they ſhould not have plurality of Wives: The end of that was to prevent ſeducements, and other miſchiefs that Polygamy hath often produced. 3. To make no extraordinary hoarding up of Gold and Silver: that was to the end they ſhould not put their confidence in their treaſures. 4. To have

a tranſcript of the Law ever by them, and daily to ſtudy it: This was that they might learn to govern according to the contents of it. 5. Not to carry themſelves over-high towards their Subjects; but to remember that they were their Brethren.

But did *David* obſerve all this? Hee committed five notorious faults after his eſtabliſhment over all the Tribes. 1. Although he had Wives enow before, yet then he recruited the number; which was accordingly leſſened by reaſon of the prodigious inceſt of his own Son *Abſolom*, which enforced *David* to forbear the company of ten of his Concubines. 2. He gave way that the Ark of God, which hee cauſed to be conducted toward Sion, ſhould be put into a Cart, and drawn by Oxen; which was an exceeding great overſight: For the Law ordered that the Prieſts or Levites ſhould carry the Ark on their ſhoulders. 3. Hee contrived that horrible act againſt poor *Uriah*: which was rather an accumulation

mulation, and knot of many crimes together. 4. He plundered and ſpoiled the innocent *Mephiboſheth* (Son of his deer friend *Jonathan*) without ever hearing the matter: and even afterward, although he had acknowledged the injuſtice of that raſh ſentence his own credulity had drawn out of his mouth; yet he revoked it but in part. 5. And laſtly, Without any other motives, ſave thoſe of his own pride, hee cauſed the people to be numbered, and drew upon his Kingdom a Plague that in three dayes ſwept away threeſcore and ten thouſand men. Where ſhall wee finde the Throne that is cleer of taint or ſpot? Where ſhall wee finde (in what kinde of Government ſoever it be) men wholly blameleſſe; ſeeing that he of whom God himſelf had made the choice, and with his own hand placed in the chair of State, was ſo irregular and extravagant? This notwithſtanding, the miſcarriages of the perſon were not of force for the aboliſhing of his Office and Authori-

tie eſtabliſhed by God himſelfe.

'Tis a great marvel, if the head, yea of the ſtrongeſt brain, runs not round, that's promoted to ſo high a place. Of all the Kings that governed the ancient people of God, there are but three reckoned that have not been faulty either in Idolatry, or ſome acceſſory of this crime: For, to ſay nothing of them that reigned over the ten Tribes, who were all ſoil'd with ſuch abominations, thoſe that ruled over the Kingdom of *Judah* to the number of 22 Kings (from *Saul* to *Zedekiah*) dipt and died themſelves in the like horrible Superſtitions: *David*, *Ezekias* and *Joſiah* onely excepted; they would fain put *Joſaphat* into the number (making four) had it not been for the unfortunate League that he made with the idolatrous houſe of *Ahab*: But theſe very three (the beſt of the pack) have they not coſt their people dear? *David* (as I have already ſaid) was the occaſion of that wonderful mortality in *Iſrael*; *Ezekias*, through his pride and unthankfulneſſe, was the cauſe

cauſe that after his deceaſe all the treaſure of the Kingdom, and all the arms of his Magazine were carried away into *Babylon*. And *Joſias*, by a War undertaken without juſt grounds, cauſed the ſhedding of his peoples bloud, and made them tributary to the King of *Egypt*: a fair warning for all Monarchs to take heed to their actions.

Hee that was the moſt wiſe, and the moſt fool among all the Kings, tels us in his wiſdom, *Prov.*25.3. that there are three things not to be ſounded; *viz.* the height of heaven, the depth of the earth, and the breadth of the heart of Kings: His meaning is, that their knowledge, and the trouble requiſite to the attaining of it, ought to be (as it were) infinite, it being impoſſible to diſcry any bounds or meaſure of it: Though their mindes remain between heaven and earth, yet ſhould they endeavour to be elevated as ſublime as the one, and likewiſe as profound as the other; yea, to lock within their dimenſions all this vaſt fabrick of the Uniuerſe:

niverſe; as they deſire to reſemble God in power and greatneſs, ought they not to be like him in wiſdom and underſtanding?

I ſpeak this not onely in regard of Princes; but alſo in reſpect of the Superiorities and Powers which are adjoyned unto them in the adminiſtration and managing of the Common-wealth; and who are or ſeem to be their collaterals, and ſo ſhare ſome part in the Soveraignty: now if it ſo happen that theſe two Authorities juſtle one with another, and that there be conteſtation about Juriſdiction; the example of God himſelf obligeth both parties to ſurpaſs one another rather in wiſdome then ſtrength. See how this mighty God deals with them that oppoſe him; he puts them to the worſt rather by his wiſdom then his ſtrength. Should he ever uſe his might, would he not ruine them in a moment? but he takes more delight to overcome them by his wiſdom. And by reaſon that this power of his cannot be diſcerned by a multitude

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of ſucceſſive events which require time, he forbears to imploy all his puiſſance againſt his adverſaries. To be brief; hee had rather be acknowledged wiſer then they, then to ſhew himſelf ſtronger then they.

Amidſt this ſtudy of wiſdome, let Kings alſo be mindful of the ſhortneſſe of their dayes. Amongſt all thoſe that reign'd over the people of God, there was none but *David* that lived 70 yeers: none of the reſt reach'd that age. O ye Kings, *I verily have ſaid, ye are gods, ye are the children of the Higheſt; Nevertheleſſe, ye ſhall die like men*, and fall as ſoon as any other.

2. *The peoples duty towards their Kings, and themſelves.*

Now let us ſpeak of the people: and here I put a Queſtion: Wherefore our Lord commanding (*Mat.*22.21) to render to God and *Ceſar* what to them belongs, mentions in the firſt place the dues toward *Ceſar*, before the duties appertaining to God? Wee know full well,

well, that Gods intereſt is to have the precedency before any whatſoever of Kings: ſome diſtinction notwithſtanding muſt be made herein.

1. Through all the inward and ſecret inclinations of the ſoul, our affections ought to be for God rather then any creature whatſoever: in this reſpect we muſt fear God before wee honour the King, 1 *Pet.*2.17. Yet are there many externall acts, which though they may have a reference to the ſervice of God, ought ſometime onely to follow after thoſe that we owe to man: So he that will offer ſacrifice, and is at ods with his brother, muſt let alone his oblation, and agree firſt with him.

2. The chiefeſt graces give the leſſer leave to work firſt in matters of this nature; and commonly all graces begin from the inferiour functions. To give almes is a more excellent work then to pay a debt; nevertheleſſe upon juſt demand, the payment of the debt ought to precede the giving of alms; and Juſtice goes before Charity, although this laſt

laſt be the greater grace. In Charity it ſelf, to love our enemy is a far greater gift, then to love our friend: nevertheleſſe, in a like ſtraight and exigency of them both, benevolence toward a friend ought to take place.

3. Under colour of Gods right many Jews made ſcruple to pay tribute to *Ceſar*: But our Lord approving of both the duties, mentioned that firſt whereof they made doubt, and propoſed the queſtion to him.

This Soveraign Lord God hath further manifeſted, even by his own example, what eſteem we ought to have of Royalty: Many times hee hath ſo far favoured ſome certain perſons, as to offer them their choice of divers things that concerned them; but never gave he this priviledge ſave to Kings. We finde four of them that had this prerogative; *David*, to whom it was permitted to chuſe one of the three judgments that were propounded to him. *Solomon*, who amidſt ſo many bleſſings that a Monarch could deſire, had permiſſion

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to chuſe, and promiſe to obtain what he ſhould ask. *Ahaz*, who had order to ask what miracle he pleaſed, either in heaven or earth. *Ezekiah*, to whom was offered the election of two great wonders; *viz.* that the ſhadow of the Diall ſhould leap forward, or return backward ten degrees in equal diſtance. 'Tis a ſpeciall favour when God preſents the choice to men: But this hee never did yet except to Kings onely. And by this ſingular priviledge he hath declared the account that men ſhould make of their juſt deſires.

Let's here touch another remarkable Point: When God was minded to overthrow the Jewiſh State, the firſt act of his juſtice was to remove their Kings. We know that this people had alſo both Prophets and Prieſts: but God took not from them theſe lights all at once. He begins with the Regal power, which was wholly extinct and ſuppreſt in *Zedekias*, that was their laſt King; they had ſtill Prophets, yea, after their return from Captivity: but

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ſoon after God took away their Propheſie likewiſe, and nothing was left them but a corrupt Prieſthood, that in its time was alſo aboliſhed. So that it is evident, the ruine of their State aroſe from the ſubverſion of the Seat Royall.

I have one queſtion more: When is it that a Kingdom is in moſt danger? when the King is good and the people bad? or when both, *viz.* King and people are alike wicked? One would judge (at firſt ſight) that there is more likelihood, and more reaſon of ruine when both are evill, then when one of the two is good: The contrary, notwithſtanding, falls out ſometimes, and we are able to bring inſtance of it. A man may very well report here what is obſerved of *Hoſeah* the laſt King of the ten Tribes, (2 *King.* 17. 2, *&c.*) *viz.* that the Text ſaith of him, that hee *ſinned not ſo much as the Kings his Predeceſſors had done:* and yet in the dayes of this Prince (the leſſe blameable of all thoſe that had ſwayed the Scepter before

 him)

him) the people were carried away priſoners into *Aſſyria*, whence they never more returned, and the Kingdome was laid in the duſt, that had ſtood and endured ſo long under the Dominion of ſo many wicked Kings: Why did not this finall deſolation befall it under *Jeroboam*, authour of the idolatrous golden Calves? Or under the deteſtable and bloudy *Ahab*, that brought in Baaliſme, and maſſacred the Prophets? The Hebrews render ſome reaſon for it. When the King is evill (ſay they) the people have ſome pretence to be ſo too: For the greatneſſe of ſuch an example, the naughty influences of a depraved Court, the incitements it yeeldeth to do evill, the diſgraces and diſcountenances that it puts upon good men, bring the world to that paſſe, that it is a fault to be without fault. But when the King is good, the wickedneſſe of the people hath no excuſe: but on the contrary, they are ſo much the more condemnable, and liable to greater puniſhment.

But

But oh, how happy is that Kingdom, where the King and his People are united in goodneſſe! Oh how precious and odoriferous is that oyl which deſcends from the head to the feet!

For the remainder, I will not here handle again the Queſtion wee treated of not long ſince, concerning two parties that make war one upon another; *viz.* if it be alwayes true, that one is alwayes in the right, the other in the wrong: it often happens, that both are in the wrong in divers reſpects. In the War between *Abimelech* and the Sechemites, both ſides were faulty, and God deſtroyed the one by the other, *Judg.* 9. often alſo hee that is in the wrong, thinks hee hath good title. In this War of *David* upon the Tribes, if God had not decided the ſtrife, would not any man living have ſaid, that the right had been on the peoples ſide? *David* for title of his Royalty, alledged that he was annoynted by the hand of *Samuel*. The Tribes that were willing to continue the Crown in the

houſe of *Saul*, pleaded *Saul*'s unction, his inſtalling in the Royal Throne performed by the hand of the ſame Prophet, not onely in private, as was the unction of *David*, but in the preſence of all the States of the Kingdom, after he had been choſen of God, and by him recommended to the people. Beſides, might they not have ſtood upon the many yeers of *Saul*'s Reign, and his Family in poſſeſſion of the Garland? Doth not all this, I ſay, ſeem to condemn *David*'s claim, and juſtifie the arms of the adverſe party?

But to conclude, Put caſe the right be all on one ſide; ſhall the ſword devour continually? O doleful ſword! How long ſhall it hold? do wee not know that the fruits of War are bitter, even to the Conquerours themſelves? Shall we never be glutted with eating bread kneaded in tears, and tempered with humane blood? For the Countries are all bedew'd with blood, and all our channels run over with it, as wel as did ſometime thoſe of *Egypt*; our cups are full

full of it, and our drink is nothing but horrour : all the veins of the body of this State are open ; from the ſoale of the foot unto the top of the crown, there is nothing but black and blue, bruiſes and bloud-ſhot ; ſhe is ſtretched out at length upon the aſhes that our combuſtions and firings have left ; her heart is quaſh'd, hardly panting between life and death : with a dying eye ſhee looks about, if there be any will have pity upon her wounds. O King, and yee Ancients of *Iſrael*, how many ſouls this day conjure you with tears of bloud (which would move the very rocks themſelves) and that by the holy bowels of Chriſt, that you would put ſome end to theſe calamities ! Let then the Heads of *Iſrael* go tell their King, Behold, wee are thy fleſh, and thy bones ; Thou and wee together, let's ſtanch this bloud, quench this fire, and remove theſe pitifull ruines : let's reſtore to the Church its luſtre, to the Lawes their vigour ; to the Common-weal

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an happy peace. Let both ſides endeavour to out-goe one another in benignitie, ſinceritie and pietie. Let all ambitious aimes, private intereſts, ſiniſter reſpects, cunning wiles, and fraudulent deſignes be far apart from this Meeting. When they ſhall treat thus on both ſides, will it be matter of difficulty (think you) to finde means of agreement? The higheſt mountains will ſtoop, and become plains before you; the loweſt valleys ſhall be filled, and this great gulf which ſevers both ſides, ſhall be levelled, that both may come together into one.

Now let us call upon the God of heaven, that hee would be pleaſed to come and take his place betwixt the King and the Ancients of *Iſrael*, as Judge of their Treatie, Moderatour and Decider of their differences. If wee be not enemies to our ſelves, if wee have not ſworn our own utter ruine, if wee do not take pleaſure in

periſhing, Mercie yet and Truth ſhall meet one another, Righteouſneſſe and Peace ſhall mutually kiſſe; Truth ſhall bud forth out of the earth, and Righteouſneſſe ſhall look down from heaven.

FINIS.
